POL 19 VIETS
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ACTION EA-20

INFO OCT-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-02 INR-08 L-04 NSAE-00
NSC-10 P-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-20 USIA-12 IO-13 UR-01
AID-28 RSR-01 /130 W
050947

R 111233Z DEC 70
FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8992
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
CINCPAC
AMCONSUL DANANG
USDEL FRANCE
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

EXCISE

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Saigon 19526 12/11/70

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY Joan Sjulberg DATE 1/26/82
PORTIONS DENIED AS INDICATED

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 19526

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

SUBJ: WORKING A COMPROMISE BETWEEN THIEU AND MINH

1. OCCASIONALLY PRO-GVN DAILY DOC LAP CARRIED A STORY IN ITS DEC 9 EDITION TO THE EFFECT A RETIRED GENERAL WAS SEEKING TO BRING THIEU AND MINH TOGETHER ON A SINGLE SLATE FOR THE 1971 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION.

2. THE STORY CORRESPONDS TO WHAT BOTH GENERAL TRAN VAN DON AND VNQDD LEADER TRAN VAN TUYEN HAVE TOLD US SEPARATELY IN RECENT PAST, NAMELY THAT THEY ARE WORKING WITH OTHERS TO ACHIEVE A COMPROMISE SLATE AMONG THE THREE PRINCIPAL CANDIDATES (THIEU, MINH AND KY). THEY SAY THAY FEEL A CONTEST WOULD BE BITTER AND DIVISIVE, AND THAT IN THESE IMMEDIATE DANGEROUS YEARS AHEAD OF MILITARY AND POLITICAL STRUGGLE AGAINST THE COMMUNISTS SVN CANNOT AFFORD SUCH A RISK TO NATIONAL UNITY.

3. DON HAS BEEN ATTEMPTING TO ARRANGE A PERSONAL MEETING BETWEEN THIEU AND MINH, SO FAR WITHOUT SUCCESS. TUYEN SAID HE WILL SEE MINH DECEMBER 13 TO EXPLORE COMPROMISE SOLUTION. BOTH SAY THEY HAVE DSCUSSED IDEA WITH VARIOUS SEN[illegible]

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MILITARY OFFICES, AND DON SAID HE BELIEVES GENERALS HOANG XUAN LAM, DO CAO TRI, NGO QUANG TRUONG, AND NGUYN VAN MINH ALL FEEL AS HE DOES. (MR I CG LAM COMMENTED TO AMCONSUL DANANG OCTOBER 26 THAT HE BELIEVED THERE SHOULD BE ONLY ONE MILITARY CANDIDATE FOR PRESIDENT.)

4. DON CLAIMED BOTH THIEU AND MINH REALIZE THAT NEITHER HAS MAJORITY SUPPORT, ANDKY KNOWS HE HAS NO CHANCE OF WINNING, AND ALL ARE THUS UNDER PRESSURE TO COMPROMISE. DON THOUGHT THAT ALTHOUGH MINH IS A PROUD MAN HE WOULD AGREE NOT TO CHALLENGE THIEU IF THIEU MADE SUITABLE COMMITMENTS ON PERSONNEL AND POLICIES. TUYEN SAW POSSIBLE AGREEMENT WHEREBY THIEU WOULD BE THE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE, KY WOULD KEEP THE VICE PRESIDENTIAL SLOT, AND MINH WOULD BE NAMED CHIEF OF THE JOINT GENERAL STAFF.

5. COMMENT: THERE ARE OBVIOUS OBSTACLES TO ACHIEVEMENT OF SUCH A COMPROMISE, BEGINNING WITH THE FUNDAMENTAL DIFFICULTY OF PERSUADING EITHER PRINCIPAL (AND THEIR RESPECTIVE SUPPORTERS) TO MAKE A GENUINE CONCESSION. BOTH WOULD DOUBTLESS BE SUSPICIOUS OF ANY COMMITMENT MADE BY THE OTHER AT THIS STAGE IN THE CAMPAIGN. NOR IS THE EVIDENCE PERSUASIVE THAT EITHER SHARES TO ANY GREAT DEGREE DON'S FEELING THAT A COMPROMISE IS ESSENTIAL. NEVERTHELESS THERE IS A CERTAIN LOGIC IN DON'S QUEST AND SOME SUPPORTING, IF NOT COMPELLING, ARGUMENTS CAN BE CITED. THE MILITARY HIERARCHY MAY PREFER TO BACK A SINGLE CANDIDATE IN ORDER TO SUPPORT NATIONAL UNITY DURING A CRITICAL PERIOD OF TRANSITION IN THE WAR AS IT DID IN 1967. MINH, WHEN HE RETURNED FROM EXILE IN 1968, INDICATED A DESIRE FOR THE POSITION OF CHIEF OF THE JGS. HE CONTINUOUSLY EMPHASIZES THE NEED FOR "NATIONAL RECONCILIATION" AND "NATIONAL UNITY" IN HIS CURRENT PRONOUNCEMENTS. AND HE HAS SO FAR REFRAINED FROM SAYING UNEQUIVOCALLY THAT HE IS A CANDIDATE. INTIMATIONS FROM SUCH CLOSE MINH ASSOCIATES AS FORMER GENERAL MAI HUU XUAN SUGGEST MINH WOULD NOT RUN IF THIEU MADE "SUITABLE CHANGES" IN POLICIES. KY, TOO, HAS STRESSED THE NEED FOR NATIONAL UNITY (SAIGON 19397), WHILE RECENTLY INDICATING A DISINTEREST IN BEING A CANDIDATE. AS FOR THIEU, WE DO NOT RULE OUT THE POSSIBILITY THA HE WOULD BE WILLING TO MAKE AT LEAST SOME GESTURES TOWARD MINH IN RETURN FOR NOT HAVING TO COMPETE AGAINST A STRONG OPPONENT IN A HOTLY CONTESTED, DIVISIVE RACE. WE CONCLUDE THAT DON, TUYEN AND PERHAPS OTHERS ARE INDEED TRYING TO WORK OUT A COMPROMISE AND THE CIRCUMSTANCES ARE NOT ENTIRELY UNFAVORABLE

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TO THEIR EFFORTS. HOWEVER, THE ACTUAL ELECTION IS STILL 10 MONTHS AWAY, PLENTY OF TIME FOR MORE POLITICAL MANEUVERING. BUNKER

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